DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 272 471 SP 027 855

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TITLE Sport Management Curriculums: The Need for a Business Orientation.
PUB DATE 8 Apr 86
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the National Symposium on Graduate Study in Physical Education (Cincinnati, OH, April 8, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Business Administration; *Business Education; *College Athletics; Higher Education; Professional Education
IDENTIFIERS *Sport Management

ABSTRACT

The college level sport management curriculum must go beyond the level of providing technical competencies--it must also orient graduates to using competencies in the fulfillment of management tasks. The sport management curriculum should also emphasize the unusual and sometimes unique aspects of managing a sport organization. Sport should be studied in relation to other industries. An ideal curriculum revolves around four components of knowledge: (1) core knowledge; (2) functional applications across segments; (3) supplemental electives; and (4) segment specializations, including internships. Graduate level sport management curricula should produce managers and not entry level technicians. (CB)

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Sport Management Curriculums: The Need For a Business Orientation

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CG 027 855

Paper presented at the National Symposium on Graduate Study in Physical Education, Cincinnatti, Ohio, April 8, 1986

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Sport management may be called a growth industry in academia. In 1978, Bonnie Parkhouse identified twenty graduate programs in the field. In the early 1980's, Guy Lewis (1982) could account for fifty-one such programs at either the graduate or undergraduate levels. In 1986, it is not a wild estimate to suggest upward to 150 "tracks", "concentrations", majors, and degrees in the area that is generally called sport management.

The term sport management is not always used to describe the domain, although it has probably become the preferred appellation. Relatively older programs have undergone several name changes in an effort to match title with curriculum. For instance, Robert Morris College began a management major option in "athletic administration" in 1978. By 1981 the college had a seperate department of "sports management". And in 1984 -- after many debates with the provost over proper usage -- an "s" was dropped, resulting in "sport management". Colleagues ask which letter will be dropped next. One suspects that many old hands in this field have suffered similar queries of curiosity or disdain.

Perhaps, though, we should be more sensitive to the reactions that such name games may invoke. They bring to mind the joke about the Swede who visited the old country after several decades in America. In discussing the vagaries of the English language, he cited the abrupt change in the name for sweet preserves:

"By Yiminy", he complained, "It take me ten year to learn to call it yelly and now dey call it yam!"

But names <u>should</u> have some discrete and widely understood meaning. In the case of this field called sport management, it is clear that scholars are still struggling to define terms. For instance, where does sport management end and recreation administration begin? I do not propose to answer this question in this essay. Nor am I intending to offer a

prescription that must be followed. This field is not yet ready for that. Sport management is at a stage, however, where scholars must ask hard questions and make controversial suggestions about where we are and where we should be headed. I will attempt to do this by dealing with a subject dear to the hearts of all academics--curriculum. My position will naturally be influenced by my location in a college of business, and I suspect my views will differ from most. The reader may be assured, however, that despite some fifteen years in the field I remain perplexed and restless about curriculum.

There is less question, though, about the need for some collective action. Sport Management is on the map with recent features in USA Today, Advertising Age, and Careers Magazine, let alone network television. But visibility brings scrutiny, and I fear that the field will not fare well. In some quarters, we appear to be an untopped gusher of graduates. As Dan Rooney said to me last year, "It was O.K. when it was just Ohio". Or as Tim Gleason, assistant executive director of NACDA, recently exhorted, (1986, p.11): "Sports administration is a fabulous concept. It is needed in our profession. Lets not destroy a good thing by overkill". Closer scrutiny is also forthcoming from colleagues within academia. In January 1986, the director of accredidation for the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business explained to the Association of American Colleges that his organization was concerned about the spread of "backdoor" or "pseudo" business courses outside the business schools that tended to be known as "something-something-something management". Doubtless, he would include sport management among these questionable hybrids. While the wolf is not yet at the door, there is a distant howling. And yet there still is time to build a field that withstands (and perhaps glistens under) close scrutiny.

The basis for our defense will lie, I believe, in the development of

graduate curriculums that produce people capable of managing sport organizations to higher levels of quality and productivity. Two fundamental positions demand clarification here. The first is that graduate programs should produce managers and not entry-level technicians. In outlining what a manager does or should do, one cannot be more concise than Peter Drucker, who has argued that managers are defined by three key tasks, which are (Drucker 1974, 40-42, 47-48):

1. "the specific purpose and mission of their institution" (this he clearly relates to economic performance),
2. "making work productive and the worker achieving",
3. "managing social impact and social responsibilities".

Thus a management curriculum must go beyond the provision of technical competencies, although it must do that. The curriculum must orient graduates to using competencies in the fulfullment of management tasks.

I would argue, moreover, that a sport management curriculum must go one step further: by emphasizing the unusual and sometimes unique aspects of managing a sport organization. This, I submit, can only be achieved by studying sport in relation to other industries. Business school academics (Berhman & Levine, 1984; Hawrylyshyn, 1982) are recognizing the importance of comparative studies. I sense, however, that sport management curriculums still tend to study their subject in relative isolation. This has resulted in a lack of theory the likes of which is necessary to justify the field itself. For if there is nothing unusual about managing a sport organization then there is no need for sport management.

Before outlining a model curriculum, I would stress that it represents an "ideal". I know of no curriculum that replicates its elements, although some are edging closer. Further, I do not mean to claim that a sport management program should be a proprietary right of business schools.

Indeed, such an assertion would be logically and politically untenable in academia today. I do believe, however that basic elements of the business school model of management education must be pursued if the field is to succeed. In this respect, the critical word in the paper's title is orientation.

My curriculum proposal revolves around four components of knowledge. These are: 1.) core knowledge; 2.) functional applications across segments; 3-a.) supplemental electives; 3-b.) segment specializations, including internships. In a perfect academic setting, these components would be basically sequential.

Core knowledge is comprised of three areas: a.) general education or liberal arts b.) common core of business c.) sport or leisure studies. Perhaps all of these, but certainly the liberal arts, should be treated as prerequisites, which is to say their course credit should not count toward a graduate degree. They must precede meaningful graduate education in the field. Why? To begin, the liberal arts best expose students to the complexities of the world around them. They are perhaps the best chance a student has for structured learning in what Robert Katz (1974) has called the "conceptual" skills of management--the ability to recognize, synthesize and reconcile contrasting positions by way of their subtle commonalities. Indeed in the revision to his widely circulated article Katz admitted to worries that conceptual skills could not be developed after adolescence. For this reason, this component should probably be considered as a prerequisite to graduate admission itself.

On the other hand, graduate students may catch up in their business core. Unlike the liberal arts, however, there is a clear definition of knowledge in the business core, provided by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, the sole accrediting agency for graduate

programs in business administration. This common body of knowledge includes instruction in the concepts and processes of production, marketing, finance, economics, law, ethics, accounting, quantitative methods, management and computer information systems, organization theory/behavior, and policy determination as applied to profit and non-profit entities. (See AACSB, 1985, 29, for a complete description.) In an MBA program, this material must involve no less than 20 semester hours of work. In many it is treated as prerequisite material.

Why is it fundamental? Because it provides the basic skills and knowledge that the manager needs to succeed in the general tasks that Drucker outlines for any industry, including sport. In short these are the essential "tools of the trade". To deny the student this core is to deny her the ability to solve certain problems bound to come her way. While I share the reluctance of Lawson (1984) and Morford (1972) to design curriculum based on job analysis, it is significant to see that recent surveys attempting to assess competencies required in sport management all contain a clear sense of this common core of business knowledge. (Bretting, 1983; Cash, 1983; Jamieson, 1980; Landry, 1983; Ulrich and Parkhouse, 1982). Parkhouse (1980, 19; 1984, 13), who has done the most serious analysis of the field, has called for "fundamental" courses in business administration. Although she isn't explicit, I sense she means something close to the A.A.C.S.B. core. Unfortunately, few programs in sport management require anything close to this recognized body of knowledge.

The last segment of the core would consist of sport or leisure studies, particularly in their sociological and historical modes. Sport sociology can, as Sack (1985, 5) argues, provide students with a clearer understanding not only of sport or leisure as products and industries but also of their relationships with other social institutions and social

processes. There is no better exemplar of this utility than Ingham's (1985) recent analysis of well being and the fiscal crisis of the state. In a similar vein, sport history can offer an important awareness of development in the sport industry as a result of decision-making over time (See Hardy, 1986). As Thomas McCraw of the Harvard Business School recently explained (Kantrow, 1986, 84): "History offers another way of thinking that helps people to accept ambiguity, to be comfortable with it, and to reject formulas."

Functional Applications

Core knowledge in business administration and sport studies comprised the entire curriculum in sport management when I started in the graduate program at Massachusetts in 1972. I can vividly recall my fellow students protesting to Harold Vanderzwaag that there was a gap somewhere in the middle. Indeed this remains the most critical area in the field--course-work that considers what Mullin has called (1980, 6) the "unique aspects of sport management". (See also, Ulrich and Parkhouse, 1982.) Business educators (Hawrylyshyn, 1982; Yavitz, 1982) have recognized the need for courses that demonstrate different types of businesses. Is the sport business unique? I believe so, but one frequently encounters inconsistent answers.

For instance, in a Wall Street Journal article (Lancaster, 1985), Gene Klein ex-magnate of the San Diego Chargers, said "My philosophy is, a business is a business is a business". In the course of the interview, however, Klien admitted that the mentality of owners in sport is strikingly different from that found in most businesses. More than anything, this drove him out of football. Beside Klein, others have discovered that sport is a different animal. A group of investors recently purchased Wilson Sporting Goods, which like many sport organizations had been earlier

acquired by a larger conglomerate, in this case PepsiCo. As the new CEO discovered, MBAs are often dangerous if unacquainted with sports--their vision of "pin-stripes" is straight from Brooks Brothers. (Klionsky, 1986)

The central role of academics in this field then, is to develop and circulate a body of knowledge that enables managers to appreciate the unique and unusual applications of business functions in the sport setting. Following Zeigler's ida (1973), Parkhouse and Ulrich called for such "mid-ranged theory" in 1979. It has been slow to develop. There is a fair amount in sport law, some in organizational behavior (Ulrich and Parkhouse, 1979) but the most exciting example is Mullin's work (in Lewis and Appenzeller, 1985) on sport marketing. Mullin clearly shows how the sport product and market differ from those of other industries. His suggestions have importance for managers of sport firms across a range of industry segments including arenas, teams, and media. There is a great need for similar work in the areas of accounting, finance, information and control systems, and strategic planning.

Even as the body of knowledge grows, however, what counts is the existence of these blocks in the curriculum. But this is precisely why core knowledge in business makes sense. The student (let alone the professor) cannot grasp the distinctions in sport marketing unless she has a thorough grounding in the general principles of marketing. Comparative abilities are essential; they are developed at the principles level.

Supplemental Electives

For similar reasons, the student should be allowed room for supplemental electives in the disciplines related to her career interests. Advanced graduate electives not only provide a deeper reservoir of intellectual skills for job success, they will also improve the chance that the graduate will advance the state of the art by conducting and publishing

research. An example would be the person who aspires to be a business manager in college athletics. Obviously, advanced electives in financial controls, managerial accounting, and expert systems would make her more marketable and more productive. My assertion is borne out by several studies of athletic business managers and their operations (Richards 1985; Lewis, 1979). In similar fashion, the would-be director of marketing in team sports desperately needs advanced work in marketing management and marketing research if she is ever to escape the sales and promotion mentality that now chokes this area (Yovovich, 1984).

Segment Specializations, Technical Skills, and Interships

As the student chooses these advanced electives, she does so with an eye on pursuing a career in a particular "segment" of the sport industry. Unfortunately, there is no clear typology of these segments that distinguishes their structures and operations, one from another (e.g., team sports; athletic clubs; resorts; sporting goods). Technical skills in segment areas differ from functional applications in that they are less related to general management operations and more related to the detailed mechanics of that particular segment. Parkhouse (1984) has correctly asserted the need to identify some "specialty tracks", and others have identified specialized skills necessary in some segments. For instance Nelson (1978) noted that ski area managers must be familiar with ski area design, lift operations, snow vehicle maintenance, and grooming techniques. Pope (1979) has claimed the need for intramural directors to be familiar with rules and officiating mechanics across a gamut of sports, and Cash (1983) identified fund-raising techniques as essential for Division I athletic directors.

I share this general sense that the prospective manager must master the specialized skills-what Katz (1974) called "technical skills"--of her

chosen sport industry segment. At the same time, however, I have two questions about the place of technical skills in the curriculum.

1.) Can an entire course revolve around the technical skills in one industry segment? Is there a large enough body of knowledge to support more than workshops on individual specializations?

2.) Wouldn't industry experience--employment or internships before, during, or after graduate study be a more appropriate medium for this? Indeed Katz (1974, 101) clearly stated that in smaller companies (read sport organizations) as opposed to large organizations, even the chief executive has a great need for personal experience in the industry.

Conclusions

I have outlined a curriculum that builds outward from a core that stresses a standard body of knowledge in business administration. I submit that it is this thrust--from general business principles through functional sport applications to technical skills--that separates my ideal type from most curriculums in the field. Indeed most of the promotional literature I have seen either treats business administration courses only as supplemental electives or requires only one or two. In so doing, such programs offer a curriculum without core knowledge--in short, a house without foundation.

The current crop of textbooks in the field reflect this fuzziness about curriculum. Some texts contain a rather tenuous assumption that three of the building blocks of curriculum--core knowledge in business, functional applications, and technical skills--can all be conveyed effectively in 400 or fewer pages. Two authors of a recent text (Dougherty and Bonanno, 1985, ix) actually state that their purpose is to convey fundamental principles that are "virtually independent of subject matter". Such a

book should be retitled simply Management. But I doubt that at 200 pages it would be adopted for management courses, when competing texts run to 800 pages. Even the best texts in the field (Lewis and Appenzeller, 1985; Broyles and Hay, 1978; Jackson 1981) tend to address either core knowledge or technical skills, with less emphasis on the functional applications of core principles in the sport setting. Vanderzwaag (1984) attempts to develop functional applications, but his research is so scanty that his efforts read more like philosophy than social science. This is not surprising, given the inchoate state of research. One must only hope, however, that future texts assume a knowledge of core principles and use the growing body of knowledge to develop general principles about the management of sport. Along similar lines, it is logically difficult to justify a curriculum that allows students who lack a business core to gain a graduate degree after 2 semesters of coursework plus a summer internship. Such a program would not get to first base in an accredited school of business. Why should it be acceptable in our field?

There is no one way to offer the curriculum that I have outlined. Core business principles do not necessarily have to be taught in a school of business. Given the current "closed door" policies of many business schools, sport management programs must often find other means to provide core knowledge. At the same time, however, business schools may be more open to negotiation than one would assume.

Ultimately, though, it is not the location of the program that matters as much as its orientation. This orientation was aptly summarized by Alfred North Whitehead in a 1939 address to the Harvard Business School: (in Yavitz, 1982, 176)

> The tragedy of the world is that those who are imaginative have but slight experience, and those who are experienced have feeble

> imaginations...The way in which a university should function in the preparation for an intellectual career, such as modern business or one of the older professions, is by promoting the imaginative considerations of the various general principles underlying the career. Its students thus pass into their period of technical apprenticeship with their imaginations already practiced in connecting details with general principles. The routine then receives its meaning; and also illuminates the principles which give it that meaning. Hence, instead of a drudgery issuing in a blind rule of thumb, the properly trained [person] has some hope of obtaining an imagination disciplined by detailed facts and by necessary habits.

Hence our role as academics whether we exist in schools of physical education or schools of business: to strengthen our graduates' ability to make imaginative and effective applications of business principles amidst the details, pressures and querks of the sports world.

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